

matter, and Bellamy took his seat in Congress.²⁸

African American Reaction

In the weeks after the riot, Wilmington's black churches looked for answers while white congregations rejoiced. African American minister J. Allen Kirk noted that while a funeral was being performed at Central Baptist Church, the building was surrounded by whites who thought Kirk was in attendance. Kirk explained that the whites had visited ministers and other church leaders on the Saturday following the riot to find out what sermons would be preached on Sunday.

²⁸ A list of contested elections filed in the House Documents of the fifty-sixth Congress listed the calendar of filings for the *Dockery v Bellamy* case. However, in 1901, another House Document, *A Historical and Legal Digest of All the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives*, does not list the *Dockery vs Bellamy* case as being heard by a Committee on Elections in the Fifty-sixth Congress. Further, John D. Bellamy, in his autobiography, admitted that Dockery requested that Congress not permit him to take his seat in the House, but, because of fraternal ties with many influential Washington insiders, among them Attorney General Griggs, he was able to escape investigation. An article in the Wilmington *Morning Star* in July 1899 indicated that Dockery's representative was in Washington filing papers on the case. The paper also stated that Republicans were focusing their attention on contesting the Bellamy election as well as assisting in contesting the election of Virginia Democrat, William Rhea. According to the *Digest of Contested Election Cases*, Rhea's contest was heard by a committee who ruled in his favor. United States House of Representatives, *House Documents*, "Letter from the Clerk of the House transmitting a List of the Contested Election Cases in the Fifty-Sixth Congress," Document No. 23, 56th Congress, 1st Session, December 5, 1899; Chester H. Rowell, *A Historical and Legal Digest of All the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives of the United States from the First to the Fifty-Sixth Congress, 1789-1901*, House Document No. 510, 56th Congress, 2nd Session, 1901, 581-2; Bellamy, *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*, 139-141.

Kirk, from a distance, and others in Wilmington sought to persuade blacks to "try by all means to keep the peace...ever trusting God."²⁹

Kirk realized that the black ministers were leaders in the community and that whites planned removal of the ministers from the city to assure that the blacks who remained would be "better and obedient servants."³⁰ African American church leaders approached white leaders and were told that their services would not be interrupted. The sermons given on the Sunday following the riot contained elements of acquiescence and acceptance of their congregants' new situation as second-class, endangered, citizens. One correspondent who begged the president to interfere on her behalf informed him that "to day (Sunday) we dare not go to our places of worship."³¹

At Central Baptist Church, Pastor A. S. Dunston urged his congregation to "let the past bury the past" because "what is done cannot be undone." He wished for his followers to "be still, be quiet" and "all will be well." At St. Stephen's A. M. E. Church, home to one of the city's largest congregations, Pastor J. T. Lee had fled the city, and the sermon was given by Deacon L. B. Kennedy. Deacon Kennedy's sermon warned his flock to "watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" as they did their duty to "obey God's laws," and to "do as the authorities direct." Following a similar strain of thought, Pastor E. R. Bennett of St. Mark's Protestant Episcopal Church reminded members to obey the law and Jesus' instruction to "[R]ender unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the

²⁹ Kirk, *Statement of Facts*, 11, 15-16.

³⁰ Kirk, *Statement of Facts*, 11, 15-16.

³¹ Unidentified author to President William McKinley, November 13, 1898, General Records of the Department of Justice, National Archives, Washington, D. C.